

'The best education is through practice'

Choosing the kanaka maoli way

By SUSAN DIXON-STONG

ANAHOLA — Michael Grace wears his Hawaiian heritage like a tattered badge of courage. He has rebelled against it, surrendered to it and fought for it.

The battlefield has been his teacher. There, fighting for the right to live as he believes a *kanaka maoli* should, he has come to understand his birthright.

"The only way you're going to learn about your rights is to use them," he says. "The best education is through practice."

Grace has had plenty of practice. For the past decade, he has been on the forefront of the Hawaiian sovereignty movement, jailed several times for his refusal to comply with laws he says are illegal and wiped out more than once by state-ordered bulldozers that leveled his cultural center and home across from Anahola Beach Park.

Setbacks are simply setbacks to Michael Grace. Hardly failures. The movement goes on and progress is being made. Currently living in the village of Anahola, he and his wife, Sondra Field Grace, have focused their efforts on bringing about an independent Hawaiian state.

A lawyer for the nation is preparing an indictment on their case, which will go to the International Court of the Organization of Ameri-



"You can keep saying the lie until it becomes the truth, or you can say the truth until it becomes true."

MICHAEL GRACE

Thomas Tamura/Kauai Times photo

can States and will name as defendants several state and Hawaiian Homes officials who brought action against them for occupying Hawaiian Homes property in Anahola.

Should the International Court deliberate Michael Grace's case, a story that could be told many times over in Hawaii will unfold.

When Hawaii entered statehood in 1959, Grace was a boy of 11. Born on Oahu, his parents but more than 50 percent Hawaiian, he was living with his father and stepmother.

He and his stepmother had trouble getting along, so at 13 he left home and school. He got involved with a gang that figured ripping off tourists was a good way of making ends meet.

Eventually, they got so good at it that the state, in an effort to gain control, took over their territory and established Wai'analo State Park.

At 18, Grace assessed his situation. He had a ninth grade education. He could neither read nor write. And he didn't want to go to jail.

He tried enrolling in the military but was rejected because of his poor eyesight and lack of education. So he did the only thing he knew how to do.

"I hit the beach to do my life style, which is fishing," he says.

See HAWAIIAN on A-1.